EMCC Guidelines on Supervision

Interim Statement

The EMCC Code of Ethics requires that all members have regular supervision. It is likely that the form of this (and duration, frequency etc) may vary depending on the nature of coach/mentoring being undertaken – for instance, an independent executive coach working with a strong business focus may have different supervision needs to a coach/mentor who focuses on personal/interpersonal skills and both may vary from the needs of an in-company mentor whose mentoring activity represents only a relatively small part of their overall role.

It will be some time before we can evolve a pan-European definitive typology of the various formats of coach/mentoring and how the competencies and standards might vary. In the meantime, many EMCC members have existing supervision arrangements by virtue of being members of other professional associations. However, some do not and some have had not had previous experience of supervision and its benefits.

This interim guideline therefore contains a brief explanation of the nature of supervision and some criteria to help members evaluate potential supervisors.

What is supervision

The EMCC Code refers to a supervisor assessing competence and supporting development. A more detailed way of defining the nature of supervision can be based on an idea by Proctor (1986):

- normative – the supervisor accepts (or more accurately shares with the supervisee) responsibility for ensuring that the supervisee's work is professional and ethical, operating within whatever codes, laws and organisational norms apply

- formative – the supervisor acts to provide feedback or direction that will enable the supervisee to develop the skills, theoretical knowledge, personal attributes and so on that will mean the supervisee becomes an increasingly competent practitioner

- supportive (Proctor calls this restorative) – the supervisor is there to listen, support, confront the supervisee when the inevitable personal issues, doubts and insecurities arise – and when client issues are 'picked up' by the supervisee

Proctor, Brigid (1986) 'Supervision: A co-operative exercise in accountability' in A. Marken & M Payne (eds) Enabling and Ensuring: Supervision in Practice Leicester National Youth Bureau/Council for Education and Training in Youth and Community Work

Finding a supervisor

There are a number of bodies that have qualification processes for supervisors and you may find that one of these will be suitable. However, the field of coach/mentoring is still relatively young and you may prefer to explore other options; there may also be a shortage of qualified supervisors.

EMCC is not at this time determining who your supervisor can be – however, we recommend that you apply the following criteria to any supervisor you choose:

- they have experience as a coach/mentor

- they have experience of being supervised

- they have experience as a supervisor (not necessarily of coach/mentors)

- they evidence a theoretical framework for their own practice and you find this relevant to your own work

- they evidence theoretical framework(s) relating to supervision

- they have an understanding of the context of coach/mentoring (as practised by supervisee)

- they are aware of the impact of values, beliefs, assumptions (of supervisor, of coach/mentor in their own practice)

- they are respectful of diversity in its many forms and alert to its potential benefits and pitfalls

- they demonstrate a capacity for self regulation (as will need to foster this in supervisee)

- they show commitment to CPD for themselves and others

- they agree to abide by EMCC Code of Ethics etc even if not EMCC member

- there will be no dual roles (i.e. supervisor is not also line manager, business partner) - n.b. peer supervision is acceptable e.g. between colleagues, students